



Florida House of Representatives

Democratic Office

Franklin Sands
Democratic Leader

Geraldine F. Thompson
Democratic Leader Pro Tempore

March 26, 2009

The Honorable Larry Cretul
Speaker of the House
Florida House of Representatives
420 The Capitol
402 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Dear Speaker Cretul:

On behalf of the Florida House Democratic Caucus, I write to express our strong interest in joining House Republicans to develop compassionate legislation to ensure that Florida receives the maximum available federal economic stimulus funds for unemployment compensation.

As you know, Florida is eligible to receive up to \$1.1 billion in federal aid for jobless Floridians, including \$444 million that could be used for the payment of benefits and/or to support the administration of unemployment or reemployment services – both of which are critical to re-energize our state's economy.

These vital funds will help the 250,000 or more Floridians whose unemployment benefits are running out. If implemented in Florida, the stimulus program could provide up to 20 additional weeks of unemployment benefits to residents who would otherwise lose their benefits this year if they continue to have trouble finding a new job.

The unemployment crisis of our state is horrific---and may get worse. There are

estimates that more than 100,000 more people could become eligible for unemployment benefits between now and June 30, 2010.

Florida House Democrats support passing any necessary legislation, including giving state spending authority, for Florida to use every available dollar of federal economic stimulus to benefit our citizenry.

The current economic crisis demands action. As Governor Charlie Crist has recently noted, any consequences to the state budget or Florida employers that would take effect after federal stimulus dollars are spent can be revisited later by the Florida Legislature and other state officials. Those consequences, however, pale in comparison to the tragedies facing many Florida families who are battling unemployment and the looming threat of joblessness.

Additionally, I suggest that it makes economic sense for Florida to take advantage of all the available federal economic recovery money. It has been stated that every dollar spent in unemployment compensation is returned to the economy more than two-fold. Unemployment benefits work as direct economic stimulus for Florida employers. We are recommending action that would be good for Florida businesses and the overall economy.

Our state's unemployment rate for January exceeded 8 percent and it is expected to rise. Now is the time for the Florida Legislature to make a bipartisan statement on behalf of working men and women and those who are struggling because of recent layoffs.

Florida is reportedly one of 14 high-unemployment states that have yet to act in order to receive their federal injection of extended benefits. This is unfortunate, and we need to urgently take actions to help our people.

I sincerely appreciate your help in bringing Democrats and Republicans in the Florida Legislature together on this vital issue of our day.

Respectfully,

Franklin Sands
House Democratic Leader